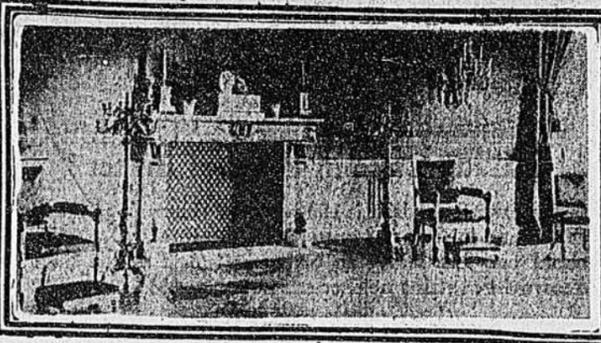


# Glittering New Year Pageant in Washington



BLUE ROOM, WHERE PRESIDENT HOLDS HIS COURT.



THE NEW YEAR RECEPTION. OFFICIALS CALLING ON THE PRESIDENT.



Picturesque court dress of the Greek charge d'affaires, Mr. Caffanzoglu.



NEW CHINESE MINISTER AND FAMILY.



Court dress of Persian charge d'affaires, Ali Kull Khan.



The Master of Ceremonies, Colonel Spencer Cosby, U. S. A.

**BY JOHN ELFRETH WATKINS.**  
**Q**UOTH the Father of His Country: "Whatever changes take place, never forget the cordial and cheerful observance of New Year's Day."  
 And this holiday, which the immortal George thus appears to have esteemed above all others, he selected as the date for one of his two public levees—the other being the Fourth of July—whose observance in this manner long since went out of style. It is by virtue of this precedent, established by Washington himself, that President Taft will hold the coming year's only court day, in honor of both officialdom and the public at large. Counts, barons, chevaliers, soldiers, sailors and marines, Tom, Dick and Harry, the ragged and hobnob, will be there with their wives, sisters and sweethearts, some in rags and some in velvet gowns. Next to inauguration, it is our greatest national pageant. It is the one day of the year when any well-behaved inhabitant of earth can be a guest of the most powerful ruler of enlightened men.  
 Before 11 o'clock a coterie of handsomely gowned women will have assembled in the blue parlor, the state apartment of the White House, that which would be the throne room were we a monarchy. These will be the honor guests of the day—women invited to stand with the President and his wife during the great levee. No order of precedence limits their selection. The wife or daughter of any official or civilian may be selected for this great privilege of being a "blue room" guest.  
**President Leads Procession.**  
 At 11 o'clock the Marine Band will strike up the refrain, "Hail to the Chief," and this will be the signal for the President and Cabinet, with their wives, to pass in procession down the wide stairway from the second to the first floor and into the blue room. Across the rear end of the apartment the receiving line will then be stretched, the President upon the left, then his wife and the women of the Cabinet in the order of their husbands'

succession to the highest office. Meanwhile the officers of the army, navy and Marine Corps, marching down the steps of the State, War and Navy building across the park, will have joined the vast group of guests, first the officials and certain societies, who will be arranged in line according to the strict order of precedence, and finally the vast washed and unwashed "public"—the tail wagging the dog. Across the neighboring public buildings, up the central aisle, through the corridor, to the right, through the state dining room and the red room the great queue winds. You now find yourself at the door of the blue room, where the master of ceremonies, gold-branded and sworded, asks your name. You give it, he repeats it, and the President of the United States, whom you have waited three hours in line to see, repeats it after him, at the same time grasping your hand in his mighty palm and pulling you onward. "With a hearty 'Mr. President'—that and no more if you know your book—you bow to the first lady of the land and make your escape through the green room and into the East Room, where you may now pause to recover your breath.  
**More Stiff Than St. James.**  
 It is all very like the way Washington fixed it, as an example for posterity, although none of his successors have placed so high a value as did that courtly gentleman on forms, ceremonies, uniforms, costumes and state display, nor have many, if any of them, shared the criticism thrust at him at his public levees, that his "bows were more distant and stiff than any seen at St. James" and that he displayed an "aristocratic and royal demeanor."  
 Upon his first New Year Day as President that punctilious stickler for etiquette who reared his infant country according to "good manners," observed the old custom, brought to New York by the Dutch, of throwing his doors open to his neighbors. The civilians—the principal gentlemen of the city—called during the day, but officialdom not till night, when he and his good consort stood side by side in their New mansion receiving the foreign ministers and home officials. There was room for them to seat themselves while partaking of "tea, coffee, plain and plum cake," and when the hall clock struck 9 they received from Misses Martha Washington the gentle hint: "The general always retires at 9, and I usually precede him," at which all arose, made their parting salutations and withdrew.  
 These guests had been admitted according to the strict order of precedence, established by the general after he had consulted the precocious Hamilton and had disregarded the advice of the latter's enemy, Mr. Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State, whom the Father of his Country suspected of being too heartily in sympathy with

the extreme views of the French revolutionists.  
**Held His Court Upright.**  
 This same code of etiquette prescribed the places of guests attending John Adams's New Year levee in Philadelphia and Washington.  
 "I was received with a hearty shake of the hand and asked to partake of punch and cake which I declined," wrote Senator Maclay, of one of Adams's New Year receptions, in Philadelphia, "and the diplomatic gentry and foreigners coming in, I embraced the first vacancy to make my bow and wish him good morning."  
 The first court held at the White House, January 1, 1801, found that abode unfinished, so the guests had to climb the stairs to the oval room—now the library—where the elder Adams held their levee between walls flecked with gold stars. After greeting the chief magistrate each guest was served with cake and wine by lithered negro servants, who handed the "delicate repast" around on small waiters.  
 The following New Year day Thomas Jefferson was to set the whole world an example of how a republican court should be held. "When brought together in society all are perfectly equal, whether foreign or domestic, titled or untitled, in or out of office," he proclaimed. It was arranged that all alike were to be subject to the rule of first come, first served, or, as he put it, "Each taking place as they arrive and without any precedence." And as a result, his critics say, "the mob spirit prevailed" at his drawing rooms. Hereafter there was such confusion that many women remained away, in fear of having their clothes torn off their backs. So Madison, who came next, was prompt in restoring the old order of precedence, and it has since obtained under Presidents of both parties. But the general public, which appears to have been little in evidence, until Jefferson's time, continued to be welcomed by "Jemmy" Madison and the charming "Dolly."  
**Madison's Gorgeous Levees.**  
 "Such a crowd never was in," wrote a lady of a New Year levee at the Madisons'. "It took us ten minutes to push and shove ourselves through the dining room; at the upper part of it stood the President and his lady. In every room was a table with wine, punch and cakes."  
 Dolly Madison reigned over her court that New Year day in a confection of yellow satin, "embroidered all over with sprigs of butterflies, not two alike in the dress," but the intense heat of the apartments caused the rouge and rice powder on some faces around her to congeal in a manner "blaming" soul and eye." At a later New Year levee "her majesty's appearance was truly regal" as she stood before her guests in a charming creation of pink satin and ermine, crowned with a plumed turban of white velvet and white satin, across the front of which, in true oriental fashion, shamed a croissant of jewels. Gold chains clasp her waist and wrists added to her barbaric splendor, but Madison himself "being so low of stature, he was in imminent danger of being confounded with the plebeian crowd, and was pushed and jostled about like a common citizen."  
**Came in a Golden Coach.**  
 A coach of burnished gold, "filled with diamonds and emitting an odor of gilt to the edge of the wheels" "brought to fair Mistress Dolly's gay court, that memorable day, the French minister, M. Serurier, and his suite, 'weighed down with gold lace.' And upon the box of this lavish coach of state rode "gorgeous footmen with chapeaux brass, gilt-braided skirts and splendid swords."  
 At Monroe's New Year levee, in 1818, the crowd gaped at the new splendor of a White House remodeled after the burning by the British. A precedence war was declared in anticipation of this reception—the foreign ministers demanding that they be received before all other officials. The author of the "Monroe Doctrine," after holding special cabinet meetings to debate the subject, agreed to receive the aggrieved diplomats "a half hour before the general company." But this privilege

Year levees were thus described by a chronicler of the time:  
 "At one moment one was knocked against the wall by a sturdy hack-driver and his fat spouse, and at the next pressed by a lovely creature under the protection of a foreign minister, at one moment the scent of eau de cologne and otar of roses was deliciously inhaled, and the next the smell of garlic and odor of brimstone assailed the olfactories."  
**Hams as Weapons.**  
 At one of the New Year receptions of "Old Hickory" the crowd became engaged in a squabble over the hams, several combatants, seizing hams from the refreshment table and bringing them down upon the heads of their opponents with laughable precision. And this battle waxed hot until the negro waiters carried the punch bowls out onto the lawn, whither hurried the rabble, thus relieving the tension indoors. The British minister, Sir Charles Vaughan, driving up to pay his respects, viewed the disorder and cried roughly to his coachman: "Drive home; this is too democratic for me!"  
 But the sacred "privilege of the entrance" appears to have been regained by the diplomats by this time. Court dress was as much in evidence at those early levees as those of present time. Thus, at one of Tyler's New Year receptions, the Mexican minister appeared in a "profusion of gold embroidery, the French minister in a uniform of blue and gold, the Spanish minister in costume of light blue and silver, the Austrian and Swedish ministers in white uniforms, and the Russian envoy, Baron Bodisco, was resplendent in his 'silver coat.'"  
 "As there is but one front door, the ladies were handed out of the windows in departing," wrote a chronicler of one of Tyler's New Year levees. Polk, at one of his, was described as appearing in a "seedy suit of oleum black." The diplomats during his regime still arrived in four-horse coaches.  
 "A gantlet of policemen from the outer door to the President's apartment was a New Year novelty, which brought Buchanan much harsh criticism from his guests. Indeed, this safeguard was described as 'repulsive to hundreds, who refused to enter the building and turned away.' But despite this policy one visitor complained of having his pocket picked while greeting his hostess—all of which tribulation was accompanied by the Star Spangled Banner, played by a feeble band in an invisible chamber."  
**Slaves Freed During Levee.**  
 A memorable New Year levee was that of Andrew Jackson, which followed after having shaken hands with hundreds of guests, gave an audience at noon to Seward, who brought the fateful Emancipation proclamation, for its signature. "I have been shaking hands since 9 o'clock this morning, and my right hand is almost paralyzed," said Lincoln, twice taking up his pen, in futile effort to affix his signature. "If my name ever goes into history it will be for this act, and my whole soul is in it. If my hand trembles when I sign, all who examine the document hereafter will say: 'He hesitated.'" Then, summoning his strength, he wrote, rather tremulously, the autograph which completely altered the fates of millions of citizens.  
 Grant was criticized for canceling his New Year levee, 1871, on account of the death, within the week, of Mrs. Harrison, first wife of his Secretary of War. Some of his opponents contended

ed that only a death in the President's own immediate family should deprive the people of their one court day of all the year. Exactly five years later the most radiant figure at Grant's New Year levee was Belknap's second wife, which ill-starred lady was described as wearing "one of Worth's wonderful suits, which attract attention and baffles description." Grant's levees were also distinguished for a lack of liquid refreshments, which up to this time had been freely dispensed on such occasions. Even policemen and attendants about the mansion had previously been supplied with liquor on New Year day, but in 1873 they were astonished to receive only coffee with their refreshments.  
**Full Dress in Day Time.**  
 Full dress was worn by men at these midday New Year functions until President Arthur broke the custom by presiding at his New Year reception in conventional day clothes, supplemented by pearl-colored gloves and a boutonniere. His levee of January 1, 1883, was brought to a sudden close by the death of the Hawaiian minister, Mr. Allen, who dropped with heart failure in an anteroom where he had gone to receive his hat and coat. General Arthur, after viewing the body, retired to the upper floor and ordered the band to cease playing.  
**"Receiving Line" Jealousies.**  
 Jealousies over receiving line privileges arose at Arthur's 1883 New Year levee. Upon forty ladies he conferred the honor of receiving with him in the blue room, and it was not long before they were at loggerheads over the question as to who should stand next to him in the place of "the first lady of the land." There being no Vice-President, it was ruled that Mrs. John G. Carlisle, wife of the Speaker—then in line of succession to the presidency—should have the honor place.  
 But the long receiving line of ladies was dispensed with by Cleveland, who, following the early death of the Vice-President, gave the honor place at his first New Year levee to Mrs. Bayard, wife of his Secretary of State, which official, under the new law, was the next in line of succession to the presidency.  
 The first public appearance of the President's bride was that of 1887, when thousands waited in line to see her and clasp her hand. Two conspicuous figures at the Cleveland levee of 1887 were the venerable George Bancroft, then in his eighty-ninth year, and Dr. Mary Walker, who wore a Prince Albert suit, while Mr. Bancroft, after the old-time custom, came in full dress.  
 Friction over "line precedence" again broke out in Benjamin Harrison's administration. New Year day, 1890, there was a dispute as to whether the wife of the Secretary of the Navy or of the Attorney-General should stand the nearer in line to the President's wife, and the decision was made in favor of the latter, because her husband's department antedated that of the navy.  
**She Shook 7,000 Hands.**  
 The New Year levee was omitted again in 1895, this time on account of the recent death of Mrs. Harrison, the President's wife, and at the next were presented the first foreign ambassadors ever accredited to the United States. At her last public court day, January 1, 1897, Mrs. Cleveland is said to have personally shaken hands with 7,000 people, a task which extended over three hours and forty minutes.

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